

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMCONSUL LOURENCO MARQUES

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AMEMBASSY MADRID

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USMISSION NATO

DIA WASHDC

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AMCONSUL OPORTO

AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA

C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 1919

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ELAB, PFOR, PINT, PO

SUBJ: PORTUGUESE LABOR ROUNDUP

SUMMARY: INTERSINDICAL ATTENDS THIRD WORLD CONFERENCE. HOUSES
OCCUPIED BY WORKERS. FARMERS DEMONSTRATE IN COIMBRA. UNION

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DEVELOPMENTS. END SUMMARY.

1. INTERSINDICAL AT THIRD WORLD CONFERENCE:

THREE REPRESENTATIVES OF INTERSINDICAL, PORTUGAL'S LABOR CONFEDERATION, ATTENDED THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF PETROLEUM AND CHEMICAL WORKERS IN ALGIERS MARCH 27-29. SINCE THEIR RETURN, THEY HAVE OBTAINED WIDESPREAD PRESS COVERAGE IMPLYING INTERSINDICAL'S SUPPORT FOR THE RESOLUTIONS APPROVED BY THE CONFERENCE, WHICH INCLUDE: DENOUNCING US THREATS AGAINST OIL-PRODUCING COUNTRIES; DENOUNCING ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL PETROLEUM COMPANIES; DENOUNCING ALLEGATIONS THAT OIL PRICE INCREASES RESPONSIBLE FOR "CURRENT CRISIS OF CAPITALIST SYSTEM;" AND A CALL FOR NATIONALIZATION OF PETROLEUM INDUSTRY, FROM PROSPECTING TO DISTRIBUTION. THE INTERSINDICAL DELEGATES PRAISED THE MANNER IN WHICH THEY WERE RECEIVED BY THE 62 DELEGATIONS ATTENDING THE CONFERENCE.

2. WAVE OF HOUSING OCCUPATIONS CONTINUES:

THE PRACTICE OF WORKERS' FAMILIES OCCUPYING VACANT HOUSING IS SPREADING. THE WAVE OF OCCUPATIONS STARTED IN LATE FEBRUARY FOLLOWING THE EXPIRATION OF A GRACE PERIOD DURING WHICH LANDLORDS WERE TO LIST ALL VACANT RENTAL HOUSING WITH MUNICIPAL AUTHORITIES. VARIOUS FAR-LEFT POLITICAL PARTIES HAVE ALSO TAKEN OVER VACANT BUILDINGS FOR USE AS HEADQUARTERS OR FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICE FACILITIES. AMCONSUL OPORTO REPORTS SOME FIFTY HOUSES ARE KNOWN TO HAVE BEEN OCCUPIED IN NORTHERN PORTUGAL. POSSIBLY EQUAL NUMBER OCCUPIED IN SOUTHERN PORTUGAL, INCLUDING ALGARVE.

3. IN MANY CASES OCCUPIED HOUSES HAD BEEN EFFECTIVELY ABANDONED BY OWNERS FOR PROLONGED PERIODS. SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EMIGRATION HAS ISSUED MILDLY-WORDED CONDEMNATION OF "INDISCRIMINATE" OCCUPATION OF HOUSING OWNED BY EMIGRANTS. COMMUNIST PARTY HAS BEEN SILENT ON ISSUE, FAR-LEFT PARTIES SUPPORT THE WORKERS, WHILE THE SOCIALIST PARTY HAS STATED ITS OPPOSITION TO THE OCCUPATIONS. IN SEVERAL INSTANCES WHERE WORKERS HAVE OCCUPIED RECENTLY COMPLETED MUNICIPAL HOUSING PROJECTS, MILITARY HAS STEPPED IN TO REMOVE SQUATTERS AND PROTECT HOUSING FOR DESIGNATED OCCUPANTS. HOWEVER, IN MANY INSTANCES LANDLORDS ARE RECEIVING LITTLE OR NO ASSISTANCE FROM AUTHORITIES IN RECOVERING THEIR PROPERTIES AND ARE ACQUIESCING, FOR THE PRESENT, IN THEIR
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OCCUPATION.

4. COMMENT: OCCUPATIONS OF EMIGRANTS' HOUSES CAN HAVE A MARKED IMPACT ON REMITTANCES BY EMIGRANTS. MANY PORTUGUESE ABROAD MAKE REGULAR SAVINGS REMITTANCES, PRIMARILY FOR THE PURPOSE OF BUYING PROPERTY IN PORTUGAL. THE GOP IS THUS IN A BIND BETWEEN OFFENDING THE EMIGRANTS, AND LOSING THEIR REMITTANCES, AND OFFENDING THE WORKERS CLAIMING THEIR REVOLUTIONARY DUE.

5. FARMERS DEMONSTRATION IN COIMBRA:

A PROTEST DEMONSTRATION AGAINST GAS TAXES BY FARMERS IN THE AREA AROUND COIMBRA WAS STOPPED BY THE MILITARY COMMANDER OF THE REGION. THE PROTEST, REPORTEDLY ORGANIZED BY THE WORKER-PEASANT ALLIANCE (AOC), CONSISTED OF SEVERAL HUNDRED FARMERS ON TRACTORS. TROOPS WERE CALLED OUT AND A NUMBER OF ARRESTS WERE MADE.

6. LISBON METAL WORKERS UNION LEADERSHIP DISPUTE:

THE INCUMBENT PRO-COMMUNIST LEADERSHIP OF THE LISBON METAL WORKERS UNION IS STILL BEING CHALLENGED BY MIXED FAR-LEFT AND SOCIALIST ELEMENTS. A NEW GENERAL ASSEMBLY HAS BEEN CONVENED FOR APRIL 4.

7. MARITIME UNIONS VOTE TO MERGE:

IN A MEETING ON APRIL 2, THE SIX MERCHANT MARINE UNIONS, EACH REPRESENTING A SPECIALIZED OCCUPATION, AND WHICH TOGETHER MAKE UP THE SEAFARERS UNION, HAVE VOTED TO MERGE. (COMMENT: THE UNION'S LEADERSHIP WAS CRITICIZED DURING THE MEETING FOR TIES WITH LUAR, MES, AND FSP. THE SEAFARERS UNION IS NOT AFFILIATED WITH INTERSINDICAL.)

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